

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

Minutes

October 19, 2016

Commission Members Absent:

Frank Eastham

Commission Members Present:

Opel T. Jones, I
Bianca Chang
Peter Hwang
Joan Hash
Reverend Turner
Ivette Lopez
Ilene Kessler
Shiraz Ahmed

Staff:

Dr. Barbara J. Sands, HRC Executive Secretary
Stephanie Chapple, HRC Recording Secretary
Barry Sanders, Office of Law
Melissa Goldmeier, HRC Legal Counsel

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Following meeting being called to order, HRC Chair Turner gave warm welcome to HRC's new Student Commissioner Misbah Farroqi. Misbah is a senior at Wilde lake H.S. pursuing Political Science & Journalism. Misbah is also involved in SGA & the Student Newspaper. Her interests are promoting Social Justice throughout Howard County schools.

2. PUBLIC FORUM – Guests – Howard County Law Enforcement Agents shared information on Human Trafficking in Howard County, discussed ways to assist victims, what to do if you happen to notice signs of suspicious behavior while out and about, whom to call, etc. Officials also discussed Howard County laws as it relates to this form of slavery, and a list of resources helpful to victims once they are safe.

David Lee from the County Executive's Office shared information & answered questions regarding the appointment process of Commissioners and Student Commissioners. There are various ways applications are received i.e. through recommendations from members, or from parents, students or citizens that express an interest directly to the County Executive. Commissioners are welcomed to seek applicants and/or make recommendations. The CE has the authority to appoint someone of interest. When there is a known upcoming vacancy, members can make recommendations, or ask the CE if he already has someone in mind. If possible, Chair Turner asked David to inform the Commissioners if the CE already has someone in mind. Timeline - During the 1st or 2nd week of the month (day is determined based on CE's available schedule), the County Executive meets with staff to brainstorm, discuss vacancies, etc. Deadline date to Pre-File is the last Thursday of every month. Please note – this is a 2-week timeframe where members can forward their suggestions, recommendations to the CE. Following the prefile date, if all goes through, a Resolution is introduced on the following Monday. Two weeks after that, on the 3rd Monday of the month, the Public Hearing is held for confirmation. This entire process usually takes 6-8 wks. David recommended looking at a 3-month timeframe when you know a term is expiring. Two current HRC members' terms will expire on 3/1/17, Frank Eastham and Ivette Lopez. It is beneficial for those Commissioners who may have someone in mind for these upcoming open seats, to begin looking at candidates and submit his/her name in November. David agreed to be the point person for the CE's office for questions, concerns, etc. Bianca asked members to consider pooling for student candidates earlier than 3 months prior to their term ending, due to student schedules.

3. HRC CASES UPDATE – LEGAL COUNSEL – Appeal was denied for HRC Case No. 16-09-008.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

September minutes were approved pending one correction per Opel. In the Sept. report under #10.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES –

Peter expressed his concerns regarding correspondence dated July 18, 2016 from Opel to the County Executive. A letter was sent, in addition to a series of emails. CORRECTION – A letter was attached to the emails. All approved.

5. COMMITTEES/ REPORTS

- Finance & Fair Lending with Housing – *Ilene, Ivette, Joan* - Ilene had a meeting with FHA. Don't expect anything to occur until spring after the presidential election.
- Legislation – *Ivette* – No report
- Education, Public Safety and Student Life Committee – *Frank, Reverend Turner, Opel, Ivette* – Dr. Sands shared information on an upcoming event on 10/25 with Howard county students, parents, school officials, and HCPD. This event, initiated by some students from the Black Lives Matter movement, will address parents' and students' concerns

on what to expect when being pulled over by an officer...what should drivers' expect, what should they do, & what are the officers' expectations are from drivers.

- HRC Awards Committee – *Bianca & Opel* – Bianca thanked Stephanie for her assistance in finalizing contract, etc. for location for 2017 Awards Program. **PLEASE NOTE** – The 2017 Awards program, held on 4/20/17, will be on the same Thursday as the normally scheduled monthly meeting. Therefore, Commissioners are asked to arrive 30 minutes early to conduct a brief meeting prior to the program. The program will be held at the Historic Oakland Ballroom. The awards program has already been placed on the CE's schedule to attend. Please spread the word, the updated nomination form will now be posted to the website for those interested in submitting a nomination for an HRC Award candidate or organization.
- Human Trafficking Committee – Peter, Shiraz and Joan volunteered to work on this committee.
- LGBTQ Committee – *Opel* – No report. Opel thanked Law Enforcement for their presentation.
- Aging, Disability and Health Care Committee – *Bianca* – Bianca submitted her hard copy report to everyone via email. A listing of upcoming programs and events were also included in her report. No discussion followed.
- **NEW COMMITTEE – HRC Goals Committee** – Peter, Bianca, Rev. Turner – Focus will be community outreach, education & training, and engagement. A meeting will be planned with the county's Communications department to discuss possible webinars, podcasts, interactive webpage, etc.
- **NEW COMMITTEE – Ad-Hoc Committee** – Shiraz, Peter, Joan – This new committee will work together beginning in January to initiate the selection process for 2 upcoming open seats effective 3/1/17.

6. STUDENT REPORT – Shiraz and Ivette agreed to assist Misbah in her new role as Student Commissioner. Shiraz will be Misbah's primary point of contact. Misbah will think of some initiatives she is specifically interested in, and bring her ideas to the November meeting.

7. STAFF REPORT/UPDATES – Please see written report from Dr. Sands.

- Human Trafficking seminars, dates, locations, etc. are attached for those interested in assisting victims. Rev. Turner asked "how can the HRC assist?" Law Officials indicated assistance is needed with receiving Kits. These kits are desperately needed. A list of all items included in a kit will be re-circulated & sent via email from Stephanie to all members. A donation box is also located in the lobby of the Gateway Building. Commissioners can bring their donations to the next meeting. Shiraz committed to donating 5 kits.
- Transgender citizens are a protected class in Howard County. There are other counties in Maryland where Transgender citizens are not a protected class. Dr. Sands indicated that help is needed in this area from Commissioners to get involved, join others in Annapolis during the Legislative session, etc.
- IAOHRA (International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies) met in Philadelphia in August. Howard County volunteered to host annual conference in 2018.
- MAHRA's annual training will be held on 10/24, Columbia Gateway Building – Rm 6 from 9a – 3p. All Human Rights Commissioners in Maryland are encouraged to attend. More information will follow to register.
- Student Brochure – Eli's project (draft) brochure is in the hands of the HCPSS. Frank will give us an update.
- Howard County Sheriff's case is closed. Ivette commended Dr. Sands and her staff for the diligent work put forth in conducting a thorough investigation.

8. CHAIR'S REPORT –

Rev. Turner asked for discussion from entire body to determine if members were able to, or interested in, meeting the 2 recent candidates being considered for the HRC. Dr. Sands offered to host a meeting location for members to meet the candidates depending on availability of schedules. Majority of members were unable to confirm their availability for next Tues., therefore members will gladly accept the CE's appointments. Moving forward, Shiraz suggested appointing an Ad-hoc sub-committee to spearhead this process for consideration of candidates to fill open seats, conduct interviews, forward recommendations to the CE. Shiraz, Peter and Joan agreed to participate on this committee. Shiraz will be the point person. Committee will work together beginning in January to initiate the process for 2 upcoming open seats effective 3/1/17.

9. NEW BUSINESS – N/A

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES – Dr. Sands asked Commissioners to encourage the County Executive/Howard County Government officials, etc. to ensure a budget is created/proposed for Human Trafficking. Ad-Hoc Committee (Peter, Shiraz and Joan) will work together to draft letter on behalf of the Commission. Peter suggested having a conversation with the committee offline to discuss more details, information needed, etc. and then follow-up with Dr. Sands prior to finalizing draft letter. Ilene also suggested having Commissioners express their concerns to their County Council representatives.

II. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.